
HEALTH DEPARTMENT
NEWS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Researchers Seek Participants, Children of PBB Study

GRAND RAPIDS - Forty years after one of the most disastrous errors in agricultural history, studies on the health effects on people throughout Michigan continue. Researchers from Emory University in Atlanta will be in Kent County in November to study the impacts of polybrominated biphenyl, or PBB, in residents who were part of earlier studies and the children of those in earlier studies. The researchers continue to monitor health effects of PBB, even in those born years after the contamination. Some health effects of the PBB exposure may take many years to develop and can only be found by continued research.

In 1973, Michigan Chemical Company in St. Louis, MI shipped PBB instead of a nutritional supplement intended for livestock feed to farmers in Michigan. It took about a year to discover the mix-up, and by then, PBB had been consumed by farm animals. Many farms near the Grand Rapids area received a high amount of contaminated feed, which not only exposed farm families to PBB, but also local consumers. In recent years, PBB has been measured in people living in Grand Rapids.

In 1976, the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) established the PBB Registry (also known as the Michigan Long-Term PBB Study) to study the long-term health effects of PBB exposure. MDCH transferred the registry to Emory University, under the leadership of Dr. Michele Marcus. (Members of the registry need to sign a consent form to transfer their records to Emory University.)

Participants in the study must be 18-57 years old and have been part of the original PBB registry or whose parents or grandparents were part of the original registry. Research participation this fall involves:

- Completing a health questionnaire
- Providing a blood sample for testing of PBB and other chemicals
- Physical assessment (weight, height, and waist to hip measurements)

There are still many uncertainties about PBB. "This is an opportunity to find out your own levels of exposure and to make an important contribution to understanding the health effects of PBB," said Dr. Michele Marcus of Emory University. In women with high PBB exposure, some had differences in their menstrual cycles and lower estrogen levels. It has also been noted that the population has more cases of breast cancer than expected. Men with high PBB exposure are more likely to report thyroid problems. In children of women with high PBB exposure, PBB transfers to children in the womb and through breast milk, so those who were breastfed were much more likely to have PBB in their blood. Breastfed daughters' first menstrual period was a year earlier

(more)

KCHD has been in the business of providing health services to Kent County since 1931. The Health Department is home to nearly 260 employees including public health nurses, sanitarians, health educators, technicians, public health administrators, and specialized staff at the Kent County Animal Shelter. The Health Department operates one main clinic and three satellite clinics located in Kentwood, Rockford, and Grand Rapids. To learn more about KCHD services, visit www.accesskent.com/health.

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than unexposed girls, and daughters were more likely to experience a miscarriage as adults. Sons were more likely to report a genital or urinary condition, and showed indications of slower growth and pubertal development.

Dr. Michele Marcus and her team will use the new Kent County South Clinic to meet with participants in early November. “Studies like the PBB research are one of the fundamental components of what we do in public health,” said Adam London, Health Officer of the Kent County Health Department. “Our staff is honored that we can assist Dr. Marcus and her team in their work.”

If you think that you, your parents, or your grandparents participated in the original long term PBB Registry, please contact the Michigan PBB research team today:

Toll Free: (888) 892-0074
Email: pbbregistry@emory.edu

For more information:
www.pbbregistry.emory.edu
www.facebook.com/PBBRegistry

The research team collaborates with several Michigan organizations to understand and address PBB-related concerns of those affected. Partners contribute to the research, assist with educational efforts, and help pursue funding to continue the research and further educate health care providers and community members. These partners include the PBB Citizens Advisory Board, the Pine River Superfund Citizen Task Force, the Mid-Michigan District Health Department, and the Michigan Public Health Institute. Dr. Marcus and her research team have hosted community meetings to share and discuss PBB-related research findings, learn continued health concerns from those affected by the PBB contamination, and share concerns related to PBB exposure. To fully serve those exposed, the research team provides current and historic PBB levels to those that have blood drawn and analyzed for PBB.

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